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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Sub-Commission on Prevention
of Discrimination and
Protection of Minorities
Working Group on Indigenous Populations
Fourteenth session
29 July-2 August 1996
Item 9 (b) of the provisional agenda

OTHER MATTERS: VOLUNTARY FUND FOR INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS

Note by the Secretariat

1. The United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations was established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 40/131 of 13 December 1985, with the purpose of providing financial assistance to representatives of indigenous communities and organizations who wish to participate in the deliberations of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations. This purpose has been broadened by the General Assembly, which decided in its resolution 50/156 of 21 December 1995 that the Voluntary Fund should also be used to assist representatives of indigenous communities and organizations to participate in the deliberations of the open-ended inter-sessional working group of the Commission on Human Rights established by the Commission in its resolution 1995/32 of 3 March 1995 with the sole purpose of elaborating a draft declaration, considering the draft contained in the annex to resolution 1994/45 of 26 August 1994 of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, entitled draft "United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples".

2. In practice, this means that organizations of indigenous people that have been authorized by the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations of the Economic and Social Council, following the procedure laid down in the annex to Commission on Human Rights resolution 1995/32, can apply for assistance from the Voluntary Fund to attend the sessions of the working group of the Commission on Human Rights.

3. The Voluntary Fund is administered by the Secretary-General in accordance with the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations and other provisions relevant to this Fund (see E/CN.4/Sub.2/1983/20). In this task the Secretary-General is advised by a Board of Trustees composed of five persons with relevant experience on indigenous issues and serving in their personal capacity. The members of the Board are appointed by the Secretary-General for a three-year renewable term in consultation with the Chairman of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. At least one of the members of the Board of Trustees shall be a representative of a widely recognized organization of indigenous peoples.

4. Currently, four of the five members of the Board of Trustees are indigenous persons. The members of the Board of Trustees are Mr. L. Dunfjeld (Norway), Mr. W.R. Ole Ntimama (Kenya), Ms. L. O'Donoghue (Australia), Ms. V. Tauli-Corpuz (Philippines) and Mr. A. Willemsen Díaz (Guatemala), who has been the Chairperson-Rapporteur since the inception of the Board.

5. The ninth session of the Board of Trustees took place from 22 to 26 April 1996 at the United Nations Office in Geneva.

6. In the period between the eighth and ninth sessions of the Board of Trustees, that is between April 1995 and April 1996, the Fund received contributions from the Governments of Canada (US$ 10,948.91), New Zealand (US$ 36,632.63) and the Netherlands (US$ 37,831.86) and from the following non-governmental entities: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (US$ 14,378) and the Shimin Gaikou Centre (US$ 1,500), making a total of US$ 101,291.40 in contributions.

7. After adding these contributions to the balance and deducting (a) 13 per cent programme support costs, and (b) a 15 per cent reserve, the Board at its ninth session had approximately US$ 103,068.11 available in the Fund for recommended allocation.

8. For the ninth session, the Board received and acted upon 154 applications for assistance to attend the Working Group on Indigenous Populations. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 50/156, the Board also received and acted upon 17 applications from organizations of indigenous people authorized by the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations of the Economic and Social Council to participate in the working group established by the Commission on Human Rights in its resolution 1995/32.

9. After examining the applications in the light of the criteria for selection of beneficiaries established by the General Assembly in its resolution 40/131, as expanded by the Board at its previous sessions, the Board decided to recommend to the Secretary-General that grants be awarded to 22 representatives of indigenous organizations and communities to attend the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, and that grants be awarded to 4 representatives of organizations of indigenous people to attend the working group of the Commission.

10. The Board of Trustees will hold its tenth session from 21 to 25 April 1997.